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BANGKA TIN, AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE STATE POWER

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Abstract - Bangka Belitung Islands is a region with the most victorious tin route in the world. This tin wealth spans from Singkep to Belitung islands. Since Malaysia and Thailand closed their production and followed by Singkep on the late of 90's, Bangka Belitung islands have become the only region producing tin in Indonesia and South East Asia. Interestingly, since reformation rolling, tin that initially under full control of government has turned to be free commodity without clear management. Tin has entered the whirlpool playing in all arenas, i.e. politics, law, ecology, social, up to the very complicated economy domain. How can the state loss its control over this nonrenewable commodity then? What can the locality do to fight and overthrow this state power?

There are at least several primary matters that must be carefully read. *First*, the helter-skelter of tin management was actually a result of uncontrolled decentralization process. Central government was negligent in preserving natural resources and finally causing local elite pragmatism found the best place to deregulate tin governance. *Second*, tin case was not merely a natural resource one; however, this had even been used for the larger interest, i.e. lame political and economical interests. *Third*, tin management deregulation then undermined the state authority as a sovereign nation. Tin smuggling case made the problem even more complicated. This country didn't only loss its nonrenewable natural resources, but also its dignity and pride as a nation embracing natural wealth principle as community property. Central government failed to manage local government and its implication was tin liberalization that subsequently eroded state power. This writing is truly urgent as the reflection of local government struggle against central government that has been running very complex and complicated.

Keywords: *Tin, Local government, Central government.*

A. Introduction

Tin commodity in Bangka Island recently has become a multiple meanings commodity. It's not only as a natural commodity having strategic value, but tin in Bangka also has transformed to be social problem that is not easy to clear up its meaning boundaries. During this time,

Bangka Island has been indeed the biggest tin producer in South East Asia and now it even becomes the only area producing tin in this region since Malaysia and Thailand closed their production in 1990's (Sujitno, 2007:5-7; Erman, 2010:3).

Tin has been such a problematic matter, not only because of its high price as an un-replaceable industrial component, but tin in Bangka Island also dealt with such complicated management with very long management journey. Far before Indonesian independence, tin in this island has given significant contribution toward global trade, particularly in South East Asia region. It's even more problematic after reformation opened the tin management tap in the more open form.

Tin is recently a national affair, it doesn't just because of its implication on trade management among countries, however it has also appeared the scowl face of a nation power (read: government). The country through central government almost doesn't have clear design in human resource management, although in Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 (1945 Constitution) it has been clearly mentioned that all natural resources is controlled by government and used as much as possible for the prosperity of people. In tin management, government almost doesn't have clear sovereignty. Instead of saving country asset, central government has drawn in partial handling ways. Bangka tin has become the blur of country face in the context of natural resources management as being focus in this writing.

This situation presumes the existence of two strongholds facing each other, i.e. between central and local government. Nevertheless, in the middle of them, capital players, miners, and brokers dynamically play thus they form a very complicated connection pattern. Local people as the closest component to this debate object are separated into dilemmatic situation. Some have draped their life from tin mining, however some other only faced with tin impact. In this situation, at least until this moment, status quo still becomes the choice.

B. Discussion

1. *Geographic and demographic setting of Bangka Island*

Bangka Island is the biggest among Bangka Belitung islands cluster. Administratively, this island is included in Bangka Belitung Islands Province region. Together with Belitung Island, these two big islands form their own province, separate from South Sumatera Province in 2000 through Law number 27, 2000. In Bangka Island, there are four regencies and one municipality, while in Belitung there are only two regencies. The province capital i.e. Pangkal Pinang is located in Bangka Island.

Located in the southern part of Sumatera, Bangka Island geographically is the closest to South Sumatera. Since long time ago, this area has become the trade route as it located in the inner side of Indonesia that connect between Sumatera, Java, Borneo, and Riau Island in one of its side.

Bangka Island is an open area from economical and political side as its shape as an archipelago brings consequence on the relatively high flow of goods and people. This area is basically multiethnic; however the more dominant ethnics are Malay and Indonesian Chinese. The Indonesian Chinese arrival history is the tin exploration and exploitation history when Palembang sultanate and colonial government ruled this region alternately (see Reid, 2011:28; Sakai, 2003: 194; Coppel, 1983:1; Trocki, 2005: 152; Vleming, 1992:224-226; Koning, 2011:28; Hoon, 2011: 404). Indonesian Chinese people who came in the early tin exploitation were generally labors employed in ditches as migrant labor. Until this moment, Indonesian Chinese has decorated local people life mosaic.

Religiously, this area is dominated by Moslem with great variation; however it has minor quantity. In addition to mining sector, people livelihood in this area is generally in plantation and marine sector. Politically, political contour in this area is very liquid since political grouping is dynamically constructed. There is no culture stream grouping. Demographic condition in this archipelago is very typical meaning that it's open and dynamic.

2. *Tin Glory History in Bangka Island*

Bangka Belitung Islands cluster was initially under the power of Palembang Sultanate, or precisely under the control of Sultan Abdulrahman (1671). In the era of Muhammad Mansur, this Sultanate brought in people from China to help in exploiting tin in this region. During Muhammad Mansur authority (1703-1714), first wave of Indonesian Chinese labors entered this area. In time of this Palembang Sultanate, tin became a simple necessity tool, for example as kitchen appliances, ritual activity, as well as barter instrument. Tin was made as precious metal in which its control became very strategic, even in 1709, Muhammad Mansur issued policy to hand over 10 kilograms tin to Sultan for each man who was going to get married (Susilo & Maemunah, 2009: 13-14).

Through VOC trade organization, Dutch entered and started to monopolize tin buying. In this era, Palembang Sultanate brought in again tin workers from China in 1722 that marking the entering of second wave Indonesian Chinese migration (Susilo & Maemunah, 2009: 15-16).

Trade relationship between Palembang Sultanate and Dutch initially took place using monopoly in which it then changed into domination under Dutch colonization toward areas in Nusantara (Erman, 2009: 83-87). Later on, British ruled Bangka with its all wealth before it was then taken back by Dutch colonial government. In the era of Japan colonial, tin in this area was also controlled by them. Practically, tin always became strategic goods in every colonialism authority. Since initial exploitation, tin had been a struggling source among various parties. Mining pattern in the colonial era had also experienced an incredible development. Since the beginning, big companies were designed by colonial government to dig tin deposit in this area. In almost every ruling, tin always gave great contribution from the income side. It's not surprising if this island since long time ago has been worldwide with its tin commodity as if it's never been run out.

When Indonesia obtained its independence, tin was nationalized as state asset and by itself it was controlled by the country (Husnial, 1983; Sujitno, 2007: 149; Susilo & Maemunah, 2009: 25-29). During Old and New Order era, tin was under country control in which its management was given to the appointed companies. In the New Order era, tin exploitation was only performed by two companies; they were PT. Timah, Tbk and PT. Kobatin. The one is State Owned Enterprises, and another is private company with small capital owned by government.

In that long history, tin brought prosperity to the ruler; however it didn't give anything to the people. Tin revenue was carried outside, while local people didn't almost enjoy it, beside of being workers in that company (Erman, 2007: 230-231; Bangka Pos, 13/4/2011; Sujitno, 2007: 299). Moreover, at least until the end of New Order era, tin was the goods that seemed easy to reach but actually difficult to get. People didn't allow to mine because tin was under nation control. During New Order period, tin was set as strategic goods and as the consequence was that tin management was ruled by the country.

3. *Tin within regulation power*

Through Law number 11, 1967 regarding General Mining, it put tin as state strategic commodity. As its implication, tin was included into state regulation domain, in which its export would be controlled and supervised by central government. It's not surprising, during New Order ruling, tin might not be managed by local people. It was the company that was appointed and given mandate to precede mining that would have the rights to exploit. As long as that time, local people would be the workers for some

positions, receiving a very small part of its gain, as well as becoming spectator for tin slab loading and unloading process to be brought outside.

Following the New Order falling, it was replaced by Reform Order, central government through Industry and Trade Minister issued new regulation regarding human resources management. Through Decision 558/MPP/Kep/12/1998, tin was no longer included as state strategic goods. Tin was hence becoming free goods in which its export was no longer controlled and regulated. Not long after that, Law number 22, 1999 regarding the authority division between central and local government opened up the opportunity for various regulations issuance that was not controlled by central government. The precondition emerging as impact of tin management having centralistic motive and strong will from some local people to participate in tin management made local government to put this situation as if finding its place. Bangka regency issued Local Regulation number 6, 2001 that made it as the permission of local people to mine. Since then, tin has become free commodity to be managed, owned, and traded by local people.

Since the central government pulling out tin commodity status as strategic commodity, mining by local people has become very massive. It emerged public mining term that was called as Unconventional Mining. Everybody could mine, starting from common people having individual mining in nature, collectively conducted by several people, to large mining managed by either personal or private big companies. Generally, they didn't have permission and performed mining in almost every region in this area.

As its implication, tin production rose up, people economy did as well, big companies having legal permission from any country would be threatened of bankruptcy since the tin price in international market fell down drastically. Tin in Bangka was separated into two routes, legal route from official companies and illegal one from tin smelter companies.

In the beginning when people were allowed to mine, tin traders were free to sell black tin ore abroad since it was not regulated. As the consequence, tin ore selling to some countries became very massive. PT. Timah as the tin superintendent screamed as the tin price in the international market fell down drastically.

In 2002, central government seemed to be aware of the mistake they made. They revised regulation by forbidding ore tin export. This decision was cunningly circumvented by local exporters by smelting non branded tin before it was exported. This tactic was successful since prohibition was exporting tin ore, while its new form was a metal plaque that had been smelted to be bars, though it didn't have legal brand.

Central government decision was thus useless. After going on for years, central government issued new rules in 2007

that restricted tin bar export regulation. It didn't mean to prohibit, this regulation only limited and tightened the requirements of tin bar export. There was no significant impact on this regulation.

In 2009, it was the issuance of Law number 4 regarding Mineral and Coal. Instead of executing new rule in managing natural resources, this Law even opened the tap of offshore mining legalization. Since this year as well, offshore tin mining has become massive through suction vessel operating by private companies. This phenomenon added the list of problems for the sea environment region following the previous offshore mining performed by local people and small companies through spraying instrument and small scale suction machines.

In 2013, central government then issued regulation obliging tin ore export carried out via one gate with the tin level requirement that was strictly permitted. So far, the impact of this regulation was also not significant. The mining continuously occurred, tin kept digging, employers kept enjoying the tin exploitation process.

4. Mining routes

There are at least two major routes of tin mining in Bangka Island, i.e. conventional and unconventional route. Generally, the meaning of this route is legal and illegal.

In conventional route, mining is performed through strict licensing procedure. There are two big companies operating in this area, i.e. PT. Timah, Tbk (state owned company) and PT. Kobatin (private company). PT. Kobatin was no longer prolonged its permission in 2013. Practically, there's left PT. Timah that was officially having exploitation permission. PT. Timah performed exploitation off and on shore in accordance with the mining concession region they have. In its operation, this company could hold local partner accompanied with stringent regulations, one of them was the obligation to sell the tin product to PT. Timah. The partner in this matter was local companies, but not one person. The product of PT. Timah was given well-known trademarks, such as Bangka Tin. This company could execute direct selling to international market and so far, there hasn't been established a tin end product industry in its producing area. As a big company, PT. Timah is a company running professional management, inter alia employee prosperity, reclamation obligation, and Corporate Social Responsibility activities.

When unconventional mining was bloom, PT. Timah directly received its impact as the tin price in world market degenerate influencing these companies' performance. As the state company, PT. Timah does have obligation to gain benefit to be deposited to country.

The second route was unconventional tin mining. This mining was initially legalized by Local Regulation number 6, 2001 (Perda No. 6, 2001) hoping that public could mine then paying royalty to local government. The hope of this Local Regulation was people directly getting benefit from

selling and local government gaining benefit as income from tin exploitation product. The fact was that people mined and sold it; however, they didn't give their royalty as previously hoped.

Unconventional mining could be executed by individual, groups, or small companies. The equipments used were various, starting from small spray machine, large diesel machine, to caterpillar production. They mined in every place containing tin deposit. The yield would be sold to collector; collector sold it back to smelter companies. Smelter companies are tin ore smelter processing tin ore to be non-branded tin bars, then sell it to international market.

Why did they sell to smelter, but not to PT. Timah? It's because smelter bought in more expensive price. Why was more expensive? Since they didn't have reclamation obligation, didn't have mining employees, and without stringent regulation as PT. Timah. Why could smelter be established? Since there was no rule regulating them performing smelting. Central government didn't regulate this and by itself they legalized their non-branded tin smelter companies' establishment? Where did they sell their smelting product then? They sold it to neighboring countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia. Once, these countries re-smelting those non-branded tin bars, giving them brand as their own country, and selling them back to international market with expensive price.

What could be change from all of these then? Certainly, the utmost would be local people demography. Local people who were previously farmers and fishermen, most of them were then shifted into miners. Local culture was changing as well, from the one that used to waiting for harvest product into all instantly items. People were changing as well into consumptive as their income from unconventional mining was much bigger than that of farming and gardening. The concerns would be post tin era with local culture that had been changed, however the tin had run out. The question would be 'What would happen in the post tin era?'

5. The rising problems

There are at least five problems rising related to tin management in Bangka Islands since reform rolling. Indeed, the problem spanning would not be meant as generalization; however, it was typical in the daily life of people in this island.

First, tin mining by public has boosted people economy. Nevertheless, it can be understood that actually not all people depending their life from tin. Some keep working as fishermen and farmers, only some people mine with its various scales. The one enjoying this condition will be them who have wrestled in it; however, the greatest benefit will not actually be felt by traders, but by capital owners, brokers, and foreign parties through the buying of non-branded tin (Ibrahim, 2012: 8-82). In several places, there have been heart-burnings between miners from outside and

local people (Batubara, 2010: 2; Faisal, 2011: 1) that bursts conflicts for several times.

Second, according to juridical, the law umbrella for people's mining is actually unclear. The miners often face security officer for controlling, there's just no clear regulation separating boundaries between the legal and illegal making the cause of why the illegal cases handling is not easy to solve (Erman, 2009: 258-268, 272). Recently, status quo occurred toward the unclear regulations. During that unclearness, mining keep continuing and inequality will keep going on. Security forces are more often double faces, between curbing and leaving alone (Erman, 2007: 261).

Third, environment problem is the most complicated one. Local miners do not care about long term environment management aspects. Coming, digging, and going are the characters attached to local miners in this island nowadays. Despite they will take the responsibility, environmental damage has been even more and more increased. In the note of Bapedalda Bangka Belitung Islands province (in Susilo & Maemunah, 2009: 95), damage to land resulted from tin mining has reached 400,000 ha or approximately 60% of total land area. 100,000 of this total land area were stated to be severely damaged. Forestry agency of Bangka Belitung Islands province (in Bangka Pos 25/1/2011) estimated that forest damage in this province has reached 65% in 2007 with 428,560 ha critical region of total 657,510 ha owned by this area. Either offshore or onshore mining has clearly disturbed fishermen livelihood. The damaged resulted from mining on coral reef caused damaged habitat (Kompas 4/2/2011; 3/3/2011) and in turns it would greatly influence fishermen's income. Recovery cost as the consequence of tin mining will be much greater than the benefit that has already obtained until this time (Wahab, 2011: 17-18; Batubara, 2010: 6-7; Kompas, 4/2/2011; Erman, 2007: 258; Rahman, 2006: 11; Bangka Pos, 13/4/2011).

Fourth, there's people's character shifting, from the previously tender and very tolerant to be very sensitive because the coming in of workers from many areas. Land competition and income gap has become a problem around the mining area. As the consequence, social conflict becomes phenomenon accompanying the mushrooming of local tin mining. Rahman (2006: 8-9) also stated that free mining emerged instant culture, prostitution, gambling, social conflict, child labor, and religious crisis. As mentioned by Kerat (2010: 86) that natural resources and bio diversity destruction brought in direct impact on local people's culture destruction. Moral and mental degradation are not proportional to people economic rate (Wahab, 2011: 18). Other problems emerging are alcohol drink, gambling, and prostitution that cannot be avoided; inter-groups conflicts appeared the same symptoms as the digging of colonial era (Erman, 2007: 260; Yunianto, 2009: 102).

6. *Central government inconsistency and local people 'revenge'*

There are two things that deserve to be discussed in tin mining management phenomenon in Bangka Island. First phenomenon is related to central government inconsistency and the second is local people 'revenge' toward tin controlling process by central government during this time.

If we take a look deeply on regulation aspect, it can be clearly seen that central government doesn't actually have long term vision in natural resources management in which tin is one of commodities that should be in great attention. When central government didn't put tin as a strategic commodity, this is actually the initial problem arises. Central government strongly placed tin as an unimportant one. Strategic status revocation over tin put the state that doesn't have natural resources control in which it should be protected and managed by the state. Submitting natural resource management to local government has made central government in a position that doesn't have mission in protecting natural wealth.

Tin, though only a small component in industrial necessity, is actually irreplaceable. There's no other manufacture component that can replace tin. In the middle of Indonesian position as the only tin producer in South East Asia region, releasing tin as unimportant commodity is truly a fatal mistake.

Unfortunately, this mistake is late to fix and it just merely prolong the problem solving. As the tin was forbidden to be exported in the form of tin ore, the strategy to smelt has put miners and local businessmen not in a wrong position. The regulation made seems not to restrict tin exploitation movement; however, it just showed again that central government keeps considering tin as unimportant commodity.

The tug of various tin regulations for more than a decade in Bangka Island has represented inconsistent central government face. Instead making stringent regulation, central government only shifted problem from tin ore to tin bar. There is no regulation earnestly made to guarantee that tin is not wastefully traded exactly in the middle of Indonesian position that is going to enter into a phase as an industrial country. By the time Indonesia is an industrial country; tin will be greatly needed for industrial manufacture; at that moment, Indonesia will import tin from abroad. Other country has recently piled up stock, while Indonesia chooses to keep selling it with non-competitive price.

The second thing that is not less important is the fact that local people during tin domination era before the allowance of public mining was just actually a spectator. Tin was dig and carried; however, local people were only given environmental problem. There's no downstream industry established by many companies since sultanate to this time. No wonder that once the tap is opened by central

government, local people seems to complete the revenge over tin and people relation that has been imbalance during this time (see Sujitno, 2007: 299).

As long as tin is under the central government control, the fact is that not much contribution obtained by local people. Through Corporate Social Responsibility, local people only obtained small part of tin benefit. It's not surprising that the major argumentation inevitably coming in front would be 'When will we enjoy the natural wealth coming from our own land?' During New Order era onward, central government only exploited tin, without thinking on how to create local welfare from the tin wealth. This history revenge presumably deserves to be read as local people struggle against country.

It's only that, to this point, the important question needed to study is the extent to which this revenge is really enjoyed by local people. Local elites probably transforming into tin businessmen are more dominant than common people. Should this not take place, revenge on tin management by local people actually loss its substance.

7. *The recent state power upset*

Tin management in Bangka Island is recently entering upset phase; a dilemma situation, not only for central government, but also for local government, businessmen, and indeed for local people. Recently, the controversy regarding this unclear tin mining origin as well as its helter-skelter has been an international topic. By looking at the impact of the environment left behind, the environment activists have contested the tin consumers such as Apple and Samsung to take responsibility in tin consumption process that ecologically has problem. Meanwhile, central government that has been sleeping for long time with its inconsistent regulation, right now facing reality that tin deposit will be run out, while environment problem seems never ended. Instead of going to an end, this problem will even more and more complicated in the future. The damaged of watershed, forest environment, residential area, ocean destruction, to the depletion of top soil/humus have been the unfinished problem in a near future. Various regulations issued by central government seemed not to find its relevance in accomplishing the problem. State lost its power in the management as a result of their own negligence.

Local government recently hasn't been run out of problem. In addition to ecological matter, other problem is the impact of people's life pattern shifting, local values erosion, to criminality threat over post tin glory. For the employers themselves, loading as much as possible and leaving the environmental and social problem behind for people is the most rational way to think. Capital tends to move from one place to another, and in turn Bangka won't be sexy anymore as investment destination area. In less than 10 years onward, tin will be predicted to be run out. It is the time that the real new problem will be started.

If so, it means that central government failed to execute the Law mandate mentioning that natural wealth is controlled by the state and utilized as much as possible for the sake of people prosperity. Central government was failed to save state asset, even let foreign countries to take multiple benefit from the wealth owned by this country. In addition, central government was also unable to design natural wealth as this country future stock. Tin was spent until run out, while on the other hand, this country is still processing to be industrial one.

C. Closure

Tin commodity management in Bangka Island presents the upset of central government face. In addition to making huge mistake in issuing principle regulations, central government also didn't have completion design in tin management. Various regulations issued tended to be partial and even undermined state sovereignty as the natural resources ruler.

Local people with its various levels have revealed strong resistance over this recent tin domination. However, even the country itself that doesn't have power to fight against various strategies rising as a response to government failure in playing the role as the natural resources sovereignty keeper. Tin in Bangka Island is such a complex and complicated problem in which it also shows that regarding natural resources management, the country has failed.

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